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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2006

In Today's Papers

EU Slams Turkey on Freedom of Expression, Kurdish Rights
All papers: The EU Commission Representative Hansjorg Kretschmer said with regard to the overruling of a court decision to suspend a prison sentence given to Armenian journalist Hrant Dink by a high court that the political authority in Turkey was responsible for the "unlawfulness" in the judiciary. Kretschmer stressed that the reform process in Turkey was being suspending, urging the government to be sterner if it really supports EU reforms. Kretschmer noted that the EU Commission's enlargement report would mention not only the trial of journalist Hrant Dink, but also other cases related to freedom of expression. "There is a clear threat to freedom of expression in Turkey, and our attitude will not change before the threat is over. There are also negative developments with regard to religious freedom. Turkey cannot board the EU train without a breakthrough on these issues," Kretschmer warned.

Joost Lagendijk, co-chairman of Turkey-EU joint parliamentary commission, told the Turkish Parliament yesterday although he understood that the government was busy with preparations for elections in 2007, reforms should not be forgotten, urging the Turkish government to clarify its positions on freedom of expression. With respect to the Semdinli investigation, Lagendijk said Van Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya was sacked for inspecting the case. "It seems that somebody is trying to hush up the issue," Lagendijk emphasized. Lagendijk also said that several political groups in the European Parliament have condemned PKK terrorism, and that his colleagues have called on the Kurds in Turkey to "abandon old methods." He noted the significance of maintaining economic development and cultural rights in southeast Turkey, and suggested Turks give positive messages by extending the permitted hours of Kurdish broadcasts and giving the Kurds the right to be

represented at the Turkish Parliament.

A third warning came from EU spokeswoman Krisztina Nagy who stressed that the new anti-terror law should be in harmony with the spirit of reforms in Turkey. Cumhuriyet calls the Nagy statement the first warning from Brussels regarding the anti-terror bill.

Erdogan-Ahmadinejad Baku Meeting; Larijani Due in Ankara
Cumhuriyet and Sabah claim the US and Israel have sent to Turkey a message through "unofficial" channels that they do not approve of a possible bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Erdogan with the Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Baku at the ECO summit, which both leaders are scheduled to attend. Therefore, the papers report, Erdogan and Ahmadinejad will only meet briefly on the sidelines of the meeting. Cumhuriyet comments that, by doing so, Ankara is trying to please Iran, and the US and Israel. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Namik Tan said in a weekly press briefing that during his visit to Ankara next week, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani will be warned to be more transparent in dealings with the IAEA and the international community. Larijani is expected to meet Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Gul, and National Security Council (MGK) Secretary General Alpogan on Monday.

PKK Threatens to Retaliate if Attacked in Northern Iraq
Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others report Murat Karayilan, the PKK's senior commander, yesterday threatened to retaliate if Turkey or Iran attacked the PKK camps in northern Iraq. Karayilan told a news conference in Raniyah

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the PKK would increase attacks in major Turkish cities if Iran and Turkey continue attacking the bases of the PKK or other Kurdish groups. Papers report that in the face of the Iranian bombings and Turkey's military preparations, the PKK militants and Kurds settled in villages near Mount Kandil began evacuating their camps and homes. Cumhuriyet says in an effort to prevent Turkish operations, the PKK leaders, through their media outlets, called on Ankara to meet with the Kurds' "legal representatives" in Turkey.

In a commentary in mainstream Sabah, Asli Aydintasbas reported that last week, in a written note of protest, Iraq asked Turkey to pull back its troops deployed in Northern Iraq, but that Baghdad withdrew the demand within 48 hours, following the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The note, presented to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the day Secretary Rice left Turkey for Baghdad, reflected Iraqi officials' concerns about possible Turkish cross-border operations in Iraq and also asked Turkey to withdraw its troops from Northern Iraq. Aydintasbas says that in response, Turkish officials stressed that Turkish troops were working in coordination with US troops and Iraqi officials and that the main goal of Turkish troops was not to damage Iraqi sovereignty, but, on the contrary, to boost coordination and fight against the PKK. Aydintasbas reports that "at this point, Washington intervened and the escalating Turkey -Baghdad tensions eased" as Washington officially told Baghdad that it did not support such demands and that Turkish troops were cooperating with US troops in Mosul, and that they had been there for a long time. Aydintasbas concludes that "the positive role the US played during this process was appreciated by Turkey, because, without the help, not only the relationship between Turkey and Iraq but that between Turkey and Washington as well, would have been affected negatively."

TV Highlights
NTV, 8.00 a.m.

Domestic News
- A bomb believed to have been placed by the PKK went off beside a bus carrying military officers' children home from

school on Wednesday in the city of Hakkari in southeast Turkey, injuring 21 people including 11 children. President Sezer strongly denounced the attack.

- PM Erdogan is to meet his Greek counterpart Karamanlis in Thessalonica, Greece on Thursday to discuss bilateral ties and the Greek Cypriots' accession to Turkish ports and airports. Karamanlis will make clear during the meeting whether he will visit Turkey in the short term or not.

- Turkey's main Kurdish party Democratic Society Party (DTP) said its Co-Chairmen Ahmet Turk and Aysel Tugluk will travel to northern Iraq to participate in the opening of the Kurdish Parliament in Erbil on May 7.

- A court fined ANAP leader Erkan Mumcu to pay TL 10,000 in compensation to Prime Minister Erdogan for insulting comments in an interview with Vatan daily.

- On World Press Day, AKP MP Ertugrul Yalcinbayir has urged PM Erdogan and other politicians to withdraw lawsuits against journalists.

- The Turkish Naval Forces Command said on Wednesday Turkey, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Russia will join the "'Black Sea Partnership-2006" maneuvers to be held in the western Black Sea from May 5-12. The maneuvers aim at developing

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military cooperation among the Black Sea littoral countries.

- Greenpeace has sent a letter to President Sezer urging him to veto some anti-environment provisions of Turkey's new environment bill.

International News

- The European Union has suspended entry talks with Serbia-Montenegro after Belgrade failed to hand over war criminal General Mladic to The Hague. Serbia's deputy prime minister resigned on Wednesday after the EU suspension.

- A report by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists says North Korea tops the world's most censored countries.

- Only the Turkish Ambassador to Lithuania will represent Turkey at the May 4 summit meeting in that country where leaders from the European Union, United States and the newly emerging democracies in the Black Sea region will discuss EU expansion and the NATO military alliance.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON